

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7896
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION BERLIN
USCINCEUR
USAREUR
USAFE

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USCINCEUR, USAREUR AND USAFE FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, GW
SUBJECT: HESSEN'S SPD/FDP COALITION UNDER STRESS

REF : A. FRANKFURT A-031, B 76 FRANKFURT 7155

1. AS FURTHER RESULTS OF THE CDU VICTORY IN THE
MARCH 1977 COMMUNAL ELECTION IN HESSEN (SEE REF A),
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SPD AND THE FDP WITHIN THE
LAND GOVERNMENT COALITION HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY
STRAINED AND BRITTLE. THE LATEST CRISIS CAME ON
APRIL 21 WHEN THE FDP ISSUED WHAT HAS BEEN TERMED
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AN "ULTIMATUM" TO THE SPD DEMANDING THAT ANY
SCANDAL-TAINTED SPD PERSONALITIES WITHDRAW FROM
THE "KOALITIONSRUNDE"-- AN INFORMAL BODY COMPOSED
OF LAND MINISTERS AND PARTY REPRESENTATIVES WHICH
MEETS REGULARLY TO IRON OUT INTERPARTY DIFFERENCES
ON AN UNOFFICIAL BASIS. THE FDP "ULTIMATUM" REFERS
SPECIFICALLY TO SOUTH HESSEN SPD CHAIRMAN (AND

FORMER FRANKFURT LORD MAYOR) RUDI ARNDT, WHO HAS BEEN ASSUSED OF ACCEPTING A PARTY CONTRIBUTION IN RETURN FOR HOTEL BUILDING RIGHTS AT THE FRANKFURT AIRPORT. FORMER MINISTER-PRESIDENT ALBERT OSSWALD, WHO IS HEAVILY IMPLICATED IN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE HELABA AFFAIRS (SEE REF B), AND HAS MOST RECENTTLY BEEN ACCUSED OF ARRANGING FOR PERSONAL LOANS ON UNUSUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TERMS HAD ALREADY RESISGNEED AS LAND SPD CHAIRMAN ON APRIL 19 UNDER PRESSURE FROM OTHER SPD POLITICIANS WHO HOPED TO SATISFY THE FDP BY DUMPING THEIR MOST VISIBLE LIABILITY.

2. THE "ULTIMATUM" IS PART OF AN ATTEMPT BY THE FDP TO ESTABLISH ITS CREDIBILITY AS AN EVENTUAL LAND-LEVEL COALITION PARTNER FOR THE CDU AND REFLECTS PRESSURES FROM ELEMENTS OF THE FDP WITH VESTED INTERESTS IN SHARING THE REWARDS OF POWER TO MOVE TOWARD THE CDU. THE COMMUNAL ELECTION, IN WHICH NUMEROUS LOCAL SPD ABSOLUTE MAJORITIES WERE UNSEATED, OPENDED THE DOOR TO CDU/FDP COALITIONS IN MANY COUNTRIES AND SMALL TOWNS AREOUND HESSE. IN THE CITIES OF DARMSTADT AND OFFENBACH (TRADITIONAL SPD BASTIONS) CDU/FDP COALITIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN FORMED AND IN WEISBADEN THE CDU AND FDP ARE ENGAGED IN COALITION NEGOTIATIONS ALTHOUGH THE CDU WON AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY THERE AND COULD THEORETICALLY GOVERN ALONE. A SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THIS TREND IS THAT MANY LOCAL FDP ORGANIZATIONS CHOOSE TO ALLY THEMSELVES WITH THE CDU EVEN WHERE AN SPD/FDP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COALITION WOULD HAVE BEEN VIABLE.

3. THE DFP, WHICH GARNERED ONLY 5.4 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE COMMUNAL ELECTION, IS LITERALLY FIGHTING FOR ITS LIFE IN HESSEN AND MUST CONVINCCE THE CDU AND THE ELECTORATE THAT IT IS UNTOUCHED BY SPD SCANDALS AND DESERVES TO PARTICIPATE IN GOVERNMENT NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SPD. THE HARD-NOSED FDP "ULTIMATUM" ON APRIL 21 CAME AS A SHOCK TO THE SPD, WHICH WILL HAVE TROUBLE MEETING THE DEMAND TO "CLEAN UP" THE KOALITIONSRUNDE WITHOUT LOSING FACE WITH ITS OWN RANK AND FILE. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE LAND GOVERNMENT WILL ACTUALLY COLLAPSE AS A RESULT OF THESE DIFFICULTIES. IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT THE PRESENT COALITION WILL IMP ALONG WHILE ALL PARTIES MANEUVER WITH AN EYE TO THE 1978 LANDTAG ELECTIONS.LEHMANN

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